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March 5, 2014

John Eidleman
Senior Program Counsel
Legal Services Corporation
3333 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20007

Dear Mr. Eidleman:

I am writing to comment on LSC's draft report from the Capability Assessment Visit (CAV) conducted by the Office of Program Performance (OPP) at Community Legal Aid (CLA) from August 12-16, 2013. The report was comprehensive and thoughtful, and will be useful to CLA as we plan for the future. I write merely to suggest a few edits to clarify certain facts that may not have been fully conveyed to the OPP team during its visit.

Edits to Page Two:

- The first sentence of the last paragraph should be re-written as follows (changes in bold): "CLA operated as the Legal **Assistance** Corporation of Central Massachusetts (LACCM) until 2011, when as part of a plan to consolidate **the** programs serving these counties, Western Massachusetts Legal Services (WMLS) closed and LACCM took over its service area and changed its name to Community Legal Aid, Inc."
- The fourth sentence of the last paragraph should be re-written as follows (changes in bold): "If funded, CLA anticipates employing a staff of approximately 70, including **most of MJP's current bargaining unit staff along with MJP's Executive Director.**"
- The second sentence of footnote #1 should be re-written as follows (changes in bold): "The subsidiary would be staffed out of **Worcester, Springfield, and Pittsfield** by a small group of current CLA **and MJP** staff."
- The U.S.C. citation in the footnote should be to 45 U.S.C. (not 44).

Edits to Page Three:

- In the third full paragraph, there should be one comma after the word "education" (instead of two).

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Edits to Page Four:

- The fourth sentence in the third paragraph says that CLA gives advice to people with security deposit issues, which might not always be the case. It would be more accurate to re-write that sentence as follows: "Other people with housing questions may receive some advice or a referral to pro se resources or the 'lawyer for the day' program."

Edits to Page Five:

- In the first paragraph under Finding 4, "Legal Aid Corporation of Central Mass." should be changed to "Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Mass."

Edits to Page Six:

- The first paragraph under Finding 6 should be re-written as follows (changes in bold):
"Under a plan developed in cooperation with LSC and the Massachusetts Justice **Project**, CLA's intake process is currently intertwined with that of MJP, the LSC grantee for the service area. MJP operates a telephone hotline staffed by **paralegals, attorneys and support staff**, who screen applicants for LSC eligibility, and forward certain agreed upon cases to CLA for consideration. MJP **advocates** also provide legal advice and brief services. MJP intake hours are Monday-Thursday, 9:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. MJP offers on-line applications **in English and Spanish and shorter, modified applications in Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Vietnamese.**"

Edits to Page Seven:

- The third full paragraph should be re-written as follows: "**CLA anticipates that telephone and in-person applicants will speak to a screener within approximately 15 minutes of their first contact; will be forwarded to an intake paralegal for a substantive interview within approximately one day of that contact if the applicant passes certain eligibility and priority requirements; and will receive counsel and advice, brief service, or notice that their case was assigned to a casehandler within three days. On-line applicants will be served on approximately the same schedule, except that they will be screened within one day and subsequently referred to an intake paralegal if they fall within CLA's eligibility and priority requirements.**"

Edits to Page Ten:

- The first sentence in the last paragraph on the page should be re-written as follows (changes in bold): "If its application for LSC funding is successful, the restructured CLA will have a total of **37 attorneys and 14 paralegals**, who will provide legal assistance **out of main offices in Worcester, Springfield, Northampton, and Pittsfield**, and several satellite offices."

Edits to Page Eleven:

- The first paragraph under Finding 14 should be re-written as follows: (changes in bold):
"CLA's advocacy support system currently consists of **five** program-wide substantive law units: **family law, elder law, benefits (including employment), immigration, and housing and homeless prevention (including foreclosure).**"
- In footnote 4, the reference to a grant "of Massachusetts IOLTA funding" should be changed to a grant "from the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation."

Edits to Page Twelve:

- The second sentence in the second paragraph should be re-written as follows (change in bold): "At the time of the visit, videoconferencing was not yet available in Pittsfield and **Northampton**, but it is expected to be available by the end of 2013."
- The first sentence in the third paragraph should be re-written as follows: "**If this application is funded, staff attorneys currently employed by MJP will be assigned to substantive units.**"

Edits to Page Fourteen:

- In the second paragraph under Finding 16, a new sentence should be added in between the (second) sentence ending ". . . administer it for MJP" and the (third) sentence beginning "Overall supervision will be . . ." as follows: "**CLA also plans to hire another VLS staff member (since MJP reduced VLS staff due to past funding cuts).**"

Edits to Page Fifteen:

- The first sentence of the first full paragraph talks about statewide pro bono coordinator groups in which the PAI staff participate. It might be useful to add a new sentence (immediately following the first sentence in the paragraph) which says: "**CLA's Executive Director is also a member of the Pro Bono Committee of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.**"
- The sentence beginning "Other projects include . . ." should be re-written as follows: "**MJP also helps coordinate a bankruptcy initiative through which a volunteer bankruptcy attorney supervises paralegal students in the preparation of bankruptcy petitions for eligible clients.**"

Edits to Page Eighteen:

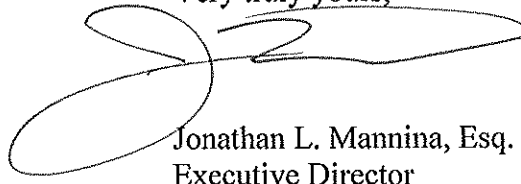
- In the first paragraph under Finding 19, the reference in the last sentence to the "main office" in Worcester should change to the "main administrative office" in Worcester.

Edits to Page Twenty:

- In the fourth full paragraph (beginning "CLA plans . . ."), the word "be" should be inserted in between ". . . standards for technologies should" and "in place in a legal services office."

Please let me know if you have any questions about the comments above. Again, thank you for the time and care that the entire team took during its visit, and for your ongoing guidance.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan L. Mannina". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "J" and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Jonathan L. Mannina, Esq.
Executive Director